

Does SLATT Need a Watchdog?

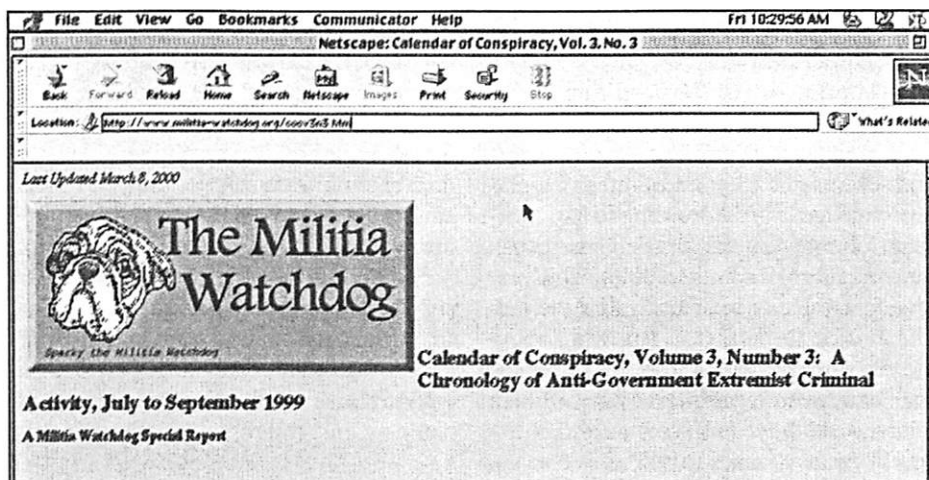
Funded by federal government contracts, the ultra-leftist Institute for Intergovernmental Research conducts political attacks on the right wing in America.

by Thomas R. Eddlem

The "Militia Watchdog" electronic mailing list is a virtual wonderland of far leftist fetishes, where Black Panther founder Bobby Seale is best remembered for his "superb" cookbook and Angela Davis — a two-time Communist Party vice presidential candidate — is described as "a thoughtful, and not particularly radical, person." But the Militia Watchdog list is not just your run-of-the-mill leftist loony bin. This list is run by Mark Pitcavage, who is working under a federal anti-terrorism contract with the U.S. Justice Department's SLATT program. His self-described "elite list" of approximately 400 subscribers is not merely populated by employees of the usual gang of leftist "watchdog" organizations but is heavily populated with representatives of the major media in addition to representatives of various federal, state, local, and even foreign law enforcement agencies.

"Pre-incident" Political Profiling

The State and Local Anti-Terrorist Training program, or SLATT, is a quasi-federal, quasi-private anti-terrorism program funded by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance and administered by a "private" organization, the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR). But SLATT, despite its suggestive name, does not train police to be able to handle actual terrorist incidents, nor does it claim to do so. According to a SLATT self-description on the IIR website, SLATT is training police for "pre-incident awareness, pre-incident preparation, prevention, and interdiction training and information" geared toward "domestic anti-terrorism and extremist criminal activity." The kind of "pre-incident awareness" that SLATT makes local law enforcement officials aware of is what it describes as "extremist-based crimes" — extremist-based crimes which



CENTER FOR TASK FORCE TRAINING STATE AND LOCAL ANTI-TERRORISM TRAINING PROJECT

SLATT WORKSHOPS.

- Continue to update the "Calendar of Conspiracy – Antigovernment Extremist Criminal Activity: A Chronology."
- Make updated versions of the "Calendar of Conspiracy – Antigovernment Extremist Criminal Activity: A Chronology" available to all previous SLATT training attendees by request and via the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) secure intranet.
- Update and distribute upon request the CD-ROM HTML and

PROGRESS REPORT

JANUARY – JUNE 1999

Federally funded "watchdog": SLATT Research Director Mark Pitcavage claims that the Militia Watchdog "has no connection with SLATT," but materials such as the "Calendar of Conspiracy" called for under SLATT's federal contract are listed as "a service of the Militia Watchdog" on the Watchdog's website.

by definition have not been committed yet, and may in fact never be committed. In other words, SLATT's main job is (in its own words) to create a political profile of an "extremist" who, according to SLATT, is likely to commit a crime or act of terrorism. In essence, SLATT is concerned with what George Orwell called, in the novel *1984*, "thought crime."

Pitcavage serves as director of research for SLATT in addition to running the above-described Militia Watchdog mailing list and a related website, www.militia-watchdog.org. The Militia Watchdog also happens to engage in the same kind of political profiling in which SLATT is contracted to engage. Pitcavage openly invites journalists to join his list, along with law

enforcement officials and academics, and claims that his private intelligence network — the Watchdog list — is entirely separate from his “day job” running SLATT. Conservative journalists are not welcome on the list; the Militia Watchdog refused access to THE NEW AMERICAN magazine for “security reasons.” (THE NEW AMERICAN was nevertheless able to monitor the list through a list subscriber.) A leader of the Communist Party of Canada, however, was admitted to the list, and Pitcavage apparently had no problem with his extremist left-wing connections. Pitcavage even threw a liberal off his list who suggested that Communism was extremist. This discrimination — though it does reveal a hard-line left-wing bias on behalf of Mr. Pitcavage — would be perfectly legal if the Militia Watchdog was truly a private undertaking distinct from SLATT.


Connections Galore

Pitcavage claimed in a Militia Watchdog mailing list post on October 27, 1999 that the “Watchdog list has no connection with SLATT or the Justice Department.” However, THE NEW AMERICAN has uncovered evidence that there are quite a few connections between the Militia Watchdog and SLATT. His claim is contradicted by another statement Pitcavage wrote to promote the Militia Watchdog website, which suggests that “people who belong to the mailing list can make professional contacts” with law enforcement officials. And many leftist list members have availed themselves of the opportunity to network with law enforcement officials. Gerry Rough of the “Floodlight Project” posted on the list last year a message exclaiming: “if you work for a federal agency that monitors extremist groups, contact me ASAP.” Rough was hoping to get federal employees who may be subscribers to the Militia Watchdog to share information held by federal agencies with his organization. “How do I go about getting the data you

have at your agency to me?” he asked in his message to federal employees. But Pitcavage has been doing far more than simply serving as a professional matchmaker between leftist radicals and law enforcement officials. On November 29, 1999 Pitcavage — again through his Watchdog mailing list — posted a draft of his *Calendar of Conspiracy: Anti-Government Extremist Criminal Activity, A Chronology* for the expressed purpose of “actively solicit-

under SLATT contract to create. These reports are not posted on the Militia Watchdog site as SLATT documents. Instead, they are listed as “A Service of the Militia Watchdog.” This suggests that SLATT and the Militia Watchdog are functionally interchangeable entities.

More troubling still is the maintenance of the mailing list itself. According to contract proposals submitted to the federal government, which THE NEW AMERICAN obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, Pitcavage was paid \$77,256 dollars in 1998 in exchange for 260 man days of labor on behalf of the SLATT program. This amounts to a Monday-Friday work schedule without a vacation throughout the year, making it appear that Mr. Pitcavage is a hardworking federal contractor. The same



U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs

Washington, D.C. 20531

January 13, 2000

Mr. Thomas R. Eddlem
Director of Research
The New American
P.O. Box 8040
Appleton, Wisconsin 54913

Re: OJP FOIA No. 99-00403 (Please reference this number on all future correspondence.)

Dear Mr. Eddlem:

Please be advised that SLATT curricula materials are created and kept by the grantee and are not maintained by the Office of Justice Programs. Therefore, OJP has no records which may be responsive to your request.

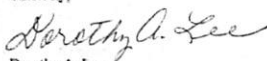
papers, white papers, and other instructional materials (including video transcripts, if available).

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You may appeal this response to the Attorney General within 30 days of receipt of this notice. Your appeal must be made in writing, addressed to the Co-Director, Office of Information and Privacy, Suite 570, Flag Building, United States Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530. Both the envelope and letter of appeal must be clearly marked: “Freedom of Information Act Appeal.”

We hope we have been of assistance to you and we appreciate your patience with this matter.

Sincerely,


Dorothy A. Lee
Legal Assistant
Office of the General Counsel

Curtain of secrecy: The semi-privatization of SLATT makes it virtually immune to public oversight in general and the Freedom of Information Act in particular.

ing suggestions” to the publication he was under SLATT contract to produce. If the Militia Watchdog has, as he said, “no connection with SLATT,” how is it that he is using the website to develop his agenda for his “day job”?

In addition to posting his *Calendar of Conspiracy* on the Militia Watchdog website, Pitcavage has also posted several other reports (*Trusts and the Untrustworthy* and *Patriots for Profit*) for which he was

contract was renewed for 1999 and 2000, presumably with a small pay increase. Yet at the same time, this full-time, federally contracted employee was regularly mailing out messages on his “private” Militia Watchdog board during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.). THE NEW AMERICAN surveyed more than 100 posts to the list personally made by Pitcavage over the last year and checked the time stamp on the messages. Seventy-three percent of Pitcavage’s messages were sent during regular business hours. Many of the messages were clearly written during the day, as they were in response to posts by others earlier in the same day. A few messages are downright hilarious in tone, if only accidentally. In one such message to his hobby, non-professional Militia Watchdog list, “civilian” Pitcavage wrote matter-of-factly on a Friday at 3:34 p.m.: “In my day job — that is, research director of the State and Local Anti-Ter-

rorism Training Program...." Only a person on government payroll could write so casually about his "day job" at a time when people with real day jobs are still at work.

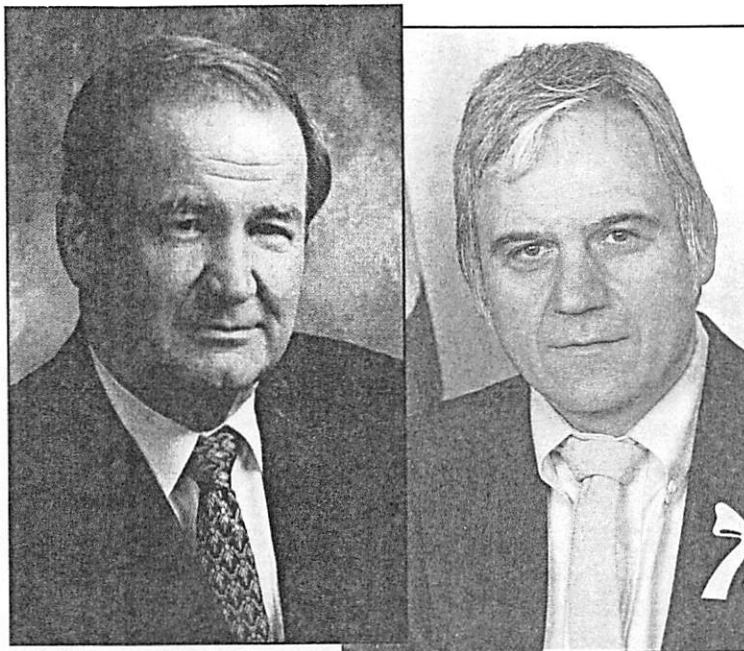
Although Pitcavage argues that there is a clear distinction between his "day job" and his "volunteer" position as administrator of the Militia Watchdog, the heavy crossover in both content and daily work schedule belies the sham. The only reasonable conclusion to draw is that Pitcavage and his fellow leftists at the Militia Watchdog and IIR are combining their "private" intelligence network with official government anti-terrorist training contracts under SLATT. And the kind of political profiling taking place under those federal contracts constitutes vicious attacks on what list members view as the "Right."

Attacks on the Right

THE NEW AMERICAN was singled out for opprobrium for publishing its report on SLATT in the November 8, 1999 issue ("A Watchdog in the Fedgov's Kennel"). The John Birch Society was labeled a "cult" by one list contributor, and an "extremist" organization by Pitcavage himself. Likewise, the popular internet site *WorldNetDaily* was attacked for reporting about SLATT, and one list member solicited background information on *WorldNetDaily* columnist David Bresnahan. Larry Klayman's Judicial Watch was placed among "organizations with a revolutionary agenda," according to one list member, because it supposedly seeks to "subvert 'democracy' and replace it with a 'Christian Republic.'" Columnist Christopher Ruddy of *NewsMax* was subjected to a particularly vicious personal attack from an officer employed by the U.S. Park Service. "Oh, the stories I could tell," began Kevin B. Fornshill of the Major Crimes Unit of the U.S. Park Service. "Ruddy is a hack and a liar. (that's from personal experience) If anyone wants more information contact me." Fornshill's message was

sent on a Monday at 9:26 a.m. local time, and it is unclear if Fornshill was on duty at the time the message was sent.

Even insufficiently orthodox leftists have been attacked on the Militia Watchdog list. Civil libertarian and longtime ACLU member Laird Wilcox was cast out of the Militia Watchdog list for suggesting that the Communist Party should be termed an extremist organization. After



Slinging mud: The Militia Watchdog/SLATT is being used to dig up dirt on non-establishment political candidates like Pat Buchanan (left) and office holders like Democrat Congressman James Traficant of Ohio (right).

Wilcox explained the circumstances of his removal from the list to THE NEW AMERICAN, a list member sarcastically remarked: "I checked the JBS [John Birch Society]/New American site and didn't find Wilcox's books for sale — but I'd bet it will be, very soon." *CounterPunch*, a newsletter published by leftist muckraker Alexander Cockburn, was subject to a similar slap after it ran a critical story on the "watchdogs."

Attacks on Federal Candidates

More frightening still is the assault on the political process by Pitcavage and his Militia Watchdogs. Pitcavage himself posted a request from Donna Donovan, former national press secretary of the Reform Party, that Militia Watchdog list members dig up political dirt on Reform Party presidential candidate Pat Buchanan. She claimed that

"we're being hijacked by Pat Buchanan and his Brigade" and that "there's a connection between Jared Taylor of the C of CC [Council of Conservative Citizens] and American Renaissance and Pat and Bay Buchanan. Have you come across anything on this? Would you let me know?" A flurry of postings obligingly appeared on the list, purporting to link Buchanan to Taylor, the American Nationalist Union, and a host of other "anti-semites and neo

nazis." Although Pitcavage introduced Donovan's letter with the invitation that, "if you have any info, and you feel so inclined, you can contact her," he couched his terms enough for plausible deniability. Pitcavage claimed: "I am not making a request for such information; I am just passing this along." But Mr. Pitcavage has not "passed along" any requests for political opposition research against left-wing candidates for federal office.

Pitcavage might also protest that the request for political dirt on Buchanan was sent on a Sunday, when he was presumably "off the clock." Had Pitcavage taken care not to commingle his federal contract with his ideological hobby-horse, such an argument may even have carried water with regard to Buchanan. Such an argument, should Pitcavage care to make it, would not hold water with respect to his attacks on Democrat Congressman James Traficant (OH). "In point of fact, Traficant has never been a moderate Democrat," Pitcavage wrote of the Ohio Democrat at 12:54 p.m. on Tuesday May 30th. Pitcavage, commenting on Traficant's view of the Waco tragedy, explained later on that day that "Traficant is a 'populist.' He makes an appeal to the 'little guy' against various dark combinations and conspiracies, trying to stir up anger and resentment for his advantage. It's an old strategy." Clearly, these views have nothing whatsoever to do with the detection of terrorists in the United States. While Pitcavage is entitled to hold any view he wants, taxpayers

While Pitcavage is entitled to hold any view he wants under our Constitution, taxpayers should not be paying him a handsome salary to undercut the federal election process.

should not be paying him a handsome salary to undercut the federal election process.

Intelligence Agencies & Federal Secrets

In addition to upsetting the federal electoral process, the public/private Watchdog list is networking with intelligence sections of foreign law enforcement agencies. On May 23rd, an investigator with the intelligence section of the Ontario, Canada, provincial police department posted a request for assistance from Birmingham, Alabama: "I am looking for a contact with either city or state authorities within a hate crimes or intelligence unit to conduct some checks on an individual we are currently investigating, who is from Birmingham." The prospect of American government officials ratting out Americans to foreign government police agencies is troubling, even when it is only our friendly neighbor to the north. But the Watchdog list is not limited to North Americans. Indeed, the Watchdog boasts that "the list includes not just Americans but subscribers from five continents."

How many other foreign intelligence agencies are networked with the Militia Watchdog is impossible to tell because of the underhanded way in which this public/private nexus operates. Pitcavage and his associates are doing all of their work outside the purview of public inspection, because the SLATT program is essentially exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. Other than the contract proposals which the Institute for Intergovernmental Research submitted to the federal government, THE NEW AMERICAN was unable to obtain any SLATT materials through the FOIA. Nothing. Not even blacked-out pages like those the Defense Department and the CIA send in response to inquiries. Because the agency has been "privatized" through the contracting process, THE NEW AMERICAN'S FOIA requests for SLATT

curricula all came back from the Justice Department with the statement: "Please be advised that SLATT curricula materials are created and kept by the grantee and are not maintained by the Office of Justice Programs. Therefore, OJP has no documents which may be responsive to your requests." The

Institute for Intergovernmental Research was hardly more responsive. SLATT and the Militia Watchdog have refused repeated requests by THE NEW AMERICAN for an interview.

The "watchdogs" have given some thought to keeping their political attacks under wraps. After the appearance of THE NEW AMERICAN'S first article on SLATT/Watchdog, Bernard J. Sussman (one of Pitcavage's main deputy dogs) explained in a letter to list members that "my own reading of the Freedom of Information Act indicates that the Watchdog membership list might be exempt from FOIA exposure because it is, arguably, investigatory material for law enforcement purposes, under the FOIA, 5 USC 552A(j)&(k). Or, in the alternative, that SLATT is not a govt [sic] agency at all and therefore not susceptible to the FOIA." In this letter, Sussman not only referred to the Militia Watchdog and SLATT interchangeably, he tried to have it both ways. SLATT/Watchdog is not a government entity and not susceptible to public scrutiny, Sussman claimed, but it *is* engaged in government law enforcement activities.

As if to further underscore the interchangeability between the SLATT federal thought police and self-styled private "watchdog" groups, Pitcavage announced on August 2nd that he will be resigning from the IIR and beginning a new assignment as national director of fact-finding for the Anti-Defamation League. When he begins his new job in September, it is not clear what connection he will continue to have with SLATT and the Justice Department. That, no doubt, is by design. Such a quasi-privatization of law enforcement, as Sussman and Pitcavage have unwittingly demonstrated, serves as a dangerous shield from public oversight. Only a congressional investigation will reveal the full extent of the activities of SLATT's political policing. ■



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